

**Cabinet for Health Services  
STATEWIDE NEWS RELEASE  
Ohio River communities note**

**Contacts: Mike Mills, Division of Water, (502) 564-3410  
Benjy Kinman, Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (502) 564-3596  
Guy F. Delius, Department for Public Health (502) 564-7181**

**STATE AGENCIES REISSUE OHIO RIVER FISH CONSUMPTION  
ADVISORIES**

**Frankfort, Ky. (July 29, 2002 )--** The Kentucky departments of Public Health, Environmental Protection and Fish and Wildlife today reissued fish consumption advisories for the Ohio River bordering Kentucky. These advisories continue, unchanged, from last year's advisory for the listed fish species caught in the Ohio River.

In 1998 the advisories were changed from an "eat" or "don't eat" style to one which provides information on the risk, or amount of fish that can safely be eaten.

These advisories are based on the agencies' review of fish tissue information provided mainly by the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO). The data used are from the years 1995-2001 for all listed species except paddlefish, which were sampled in 1991, 1998, 1999 and 2000. Fish were collected from diverse areas of the river, including lock chambers. Each type of fish was tested for organic chemical contaminants such as PCBs, chlordane and in limited areas, dioxin and heavy metals (mercury, cadmium and lead).

"Even though PCBs and mercury remain the main contaminants of concern from a public health perspective, it's good to know that the levels of some contaminants have decreased to the point that many kinds of fish are now safe to eat at the advised frequency," said Dr. Rice Leach, commissioner for the Department for Public Health. "For example, chlordane has been removed as a contaminant of concern."

Levels of chlordane in the Kentucky portion of the river have decreased over the years since these advisories were first issued.

Following are consumption precautions for various tested species in three areas (Upper, Middle and Lower) of the Ohio River bordering Kentucky. If a species is not listed, no data are available.

The agencies have developed a protocol based on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Great Lakes Protocol risk-based guidelines for contaminants. States bordering Kentucky and the Ohio River also are now using these risk-based protocols. "This science established and risk based system provides more thorough information and enables our citizens to make a more informed choice regarding the consumption of our Kentucky fish", said Guy Delius, Assistant Director with the Public Health Protection and Safety Division. " This system

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provides a mechanism which better protects our unborn and infant children, by providing targeted information to special populations, such as pregnant women and nursing mothers.”

This risk-based protocol provides information for two populations. One is for the general population. The other is for a special population, which includes pregnant women, nursing mothers and their infants, and children. Women who may be or plan to become pregnant should also consider the special population advice.

People who frequently eat fish, women of childbearing age and children are particularly susceptible to contaminants that build up in the body (such as PCBs and mercury). For this reason these individuals should follow the special population advisory.

Women beyond their childbearing years and men face fewer health risks from contaminants. However, those persons should follow the general population advisory to reduce their total exposure and be especially careful to space out meals over time. Spacing out meals helps prevent contaminants from building up to harmful levels in the body.

If most of the meals you eat are from the “one meal per week” category, you should not exceed 52 meals per year. Likewise, if most of the fish you eat are from the “One meal per month” category, you should not exceed 12 meals per year. Eating one meal of fish from the “one Meal per Month” category is equivalent to eating four fish meals from the “one Meal per Week” group. For some species, the advice is based on the size of the fish, and is relates to a meal of ½ pound of fish (before cooking) eaten by a 150-pound individual.

#### UPPER REACH (Mouth of Big Sandy to Markland L & D)

Species	General Population	Special Population
<b>Paddlefish (and eggs)</b>	<b>6 meals / year</b>	<b>No consumption</b>
<b>Carp</b>	<b>1 meal / month</b>	<b>6 meals / year</b>
<b>Channel catfish-Greater than (&gt;) 21”</b>	<b>6 meals / year</b>	<b>No consumption</b>
<b>Channel catfish-Less than (&lt;) 21”</b>	<b>1 meal / month</b>	<b>6 meals / year</b>
<b>Smallmouth buffalo</b>	<b>1 meal / month</b>	<b>6 meals / year</b>
<b>White bass</b>	<b>1 meal / month</b>	<b>6 meals / year</b>
<b>Drum</b>	<b>1 meal / month</b>	<b>6 meals/ year</b>
<b>White crappie</b>	<b>Unlimited</b>	<b>1 meal / week</b>
<b>Hybrid striped bass</b>	<b>1 meal / month</b>	<b>6 meals / year</b>
<b>Sauger</b>	<b>1 meal / week</b>	<b>1 meal / month</b>
<b>Flathead catfish</b>	<b>1 meal / week</b>	<b>1 meal / month</b>
<b>Black basses (largemouth, etc.)</b>	<b>1 meal / week</b>	<b>1 meal / month</b>

#### MIDDLE REACH (Markland L & D to Cannelton L & D)

Species	General Population	Special Population
<b>Paddlefish (and eggs)</b>	<b>6 meals / year</b>	<b>No consumption</b>
Channel catfish >21”	6 meals / year	No consumption
Channel catfish <21”	1 meal / month	6 meals / year
Carp	1 meal / month	6 meals / year
Hybrid striped bass	1 meal / month	6 meals / year

White bass	1 meal / month	6 meals / year
Drum	1 meal / month	6 meals / year
Sauger	1 meal / week	1 meal / month
Black basses	1 meal / week	1 meal / month
Flathead catfish	1 meal / week	1 meal / month

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#### LOWER REACH (Cannelton L & D to Mouth of Ohio River)

Species	General Population	Special Population
Paddlefish (and eggs)	6 meals / year	No consumption
Channel catfish	1 meal / month	6 meals / year
Carp	1 meal / month	6 meals / year
Blue catfish >14"	1 meal / month	6 meals / year
Blue catfish <14"	1 meal / week	1 meal / month
Drum	1 meal / month	6 meals / year
Hybrid striped bass	1 meal / month	6 meals / year
Sauger	1 meal / week	1 meal / month
White bass	1 meal / month	6 meals / year
Black basses (largemouth, spotted)	1 meal / week	1 meal / month
White crappie	Unlimited	1 meal / week
Bigmouth buffalo	1 meal / week	1 meal / month

In April 2000, a statewide mercury advisory was issued for all freshwater fish from Kentucky waters, including the Ohio River. Women of childbearing age and children 6 years and younger should eat no more than one meal per week of any freshwater fish.

Proper cleaning, skinning, trimming and cooking can reduce contaminant levels in the fish. Eat only skinless, boneless fillets with as much fat as possible removed. Do not eat the skin, which can contain higher levels of fat. Eggs should be discarded. Roasting, baking or broiling has been found to reduce the levels of PCBs and chlordane more than other cooking methods. Cooking does not destroy the contaminants, nor does it lower their toxicity. The heat melts some of the fat in the fish, removing some of the contaminants at the same time. Do not eat or reuse the fat and juices that cook out of the fish. **Cooking will not reduce mercury levels possibly found in fish, since the metal is bound to the flesh rather than the fat.**

This advisory is intended to inform the public about the possible risks of eating unrestricted amounts of some fish from the Ohio River. The monitoring of tissue residue levels in fish from the Ohio River is an ongoing program of the state agencies in cooperation with ORSANCO.

